

Assistant Secretary's Talking Points Friday, November 12, 2004 Florida Disaster Assistance Funds

On behalf of Secretary Tommy Thompson, it is my pleasure to announce that \$42.6 million has been made available to Florida for critical services to communities that continue to recover from the multiple hurricanes that hit the state this fall.

- **\$17.2 million** of the total will be used for disaster assistance for Florida's vulnerable elderly population.
 - We know that Florida's aging network – consisting of the Department of Elder Affairs, led by Secretary Terry White, the Area Agencies on Aging, and the hundreds of local community service providers -- have done an outstanding job in providing essential services and assistance to older persons and their caregivers who needed meals, case management, counseling, transportation and housing;
 - Many aging staff have put aside their own personal needs in order to assure the safety and well-being of the aging population living in the community. Many personnel worked 12 to 18 hour days for seven days a week to make sure seniors were cared for;
 - In the early days immediately after the hurricanes, many seniors lost their homes or their dwellings were condemned. The Aging Network worked tirelessly to find suitable temporary and in some cases permanent living arrangements;
 - Immediately following the storms, it took hours and hours of going door to door to see who needed help and find ways to connect people with the help they needed;
 - The devastation left many seniors without food and water; and
 - Staff have contributed a heroic effort to assist in extensive chore services and clean-up activities, both inside and outside the home, home repairs, and essential services necessary to meet daily needs.

- **\$12.9 million** will meet needs related to domestic violence, adult services, assistance for individuals with developmental disabilities, and for child welfare services.

- **\$11 million** will meet critical substance abuse services needs. SAMHSA worked directly with the Florida substance abuse director to estimate substance abuse services needs in affected areas totaling \$5.5 million.
 - Primary focus is funding of 11 teams to provide 6,000 individuals with screening, intervention, and brief treatment services.
 - In addition, funds will support intensive substance abuse capacity needs including treatment, residential support, and detoxification.
 - The remaining funds will be used for crisis stabilization and mobile crisis teams.
 - SAMHSA will continue to provide oversight, administrative support and technical support for the FEMA-funded Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training Program. This program provides short-term interventions to help disaster survivors cope with their current situations. States can apply for Immediate Services grants in the first sixty days of a presidential disaster and Regular Services Grants after the initial sixty days.
- **\$1.5 million** will help the South West Florida Family Community Health Center and other impacted Florida health centers with the cost of increased patient loads due to other health facility closures, replacement of supplies destroyed including medications, and damage to facility operations. HRSA has been working directly with the Southwest Florida Family Community Health Center, which has experienced damage at a number of sites including one in Port Charlotte that is no longer operational.

I would also like to mention that we are awarding funds (\$1.2 million) to Puerto Rico to assist with the social service needs of their elderly, homeless and disabled populations.

Following this event, I will be traveling to Fairhope, Alabama to meet with Governor Bob Riley to make a similar award.